DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 072 358 AC 014 202

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TITLE A Study of the Expanded Nutrition Education Program in Three Northeast Louisiana Parishes. The Findings from Extension Studies.
INSTITUTION Louisiana State Univ., Baton Rouge. Cooperative Extension Service.
PUB DATE Aug 70
NOTE 6p.; Summary of M.S. thesis, Louisiana State University; R and T Summary No. 18

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Adult Programs; *Extension Education; Females; *Homemaking Education; Indigenous Personnel; Interviews; Low Income Groups; Masters Theses; *Nutrition Instruction; *Program Evaluation; Short Courses; Subprofessionals
IDENTIFIERS *Expanded Nutrition Education Program; Louisiana

ABSTRACT

The value of a special nutrition program in three Northeast Louisiana parishes as to the effectiveness of the structured organizational approach, the teaching methods and techniques used, and use of sub-professional workers from their respective community was studied. The nutrition knowledge of 120 homemakers was determined before any training in nutrition, immediately after eight weeks of training, and again four months later. The personal interview method was used to collect the data. The same questions regarding the kind of food and drink the homemaker had during the 24-hour period prior to the interview were used in each interview. Results of the study showed that participation in the Expanded Nutrition Education brought about changes in food habits and knowledge of homemakers, but the observation four months later indicated regression in most cases. The structured organizational approach used by Extension in conducting the program proved to be a profitable experience for the Extension Aide. (DB)

ED 072358

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The Findings from Extension Studies

A STUDY OF THE EXPANDED NUTRITION EDUCATION PROGRAM IN THREE NORTHEAST LOUISIANA PARISHES

by

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A summary of an M.S. thesis in Extension Education prepared under the supervision of Dr. Edward W. Gassie, Louisiana State University, August, 1970.

A copy of the complete thesis is on file in the main Library at Louisiana State University.

R & T--Summary No. 18

Statement of the Problem

This nation has the greatest food production capacity ever achieved,--the ability to produce more than the domestic and foreign markets can absorb. With an abundance of food, high standards of living and knowledge of the improtance of good nutrition, there are still nutritional problems of major importance to be solved. Lack of money and the lack of knowledge of the simplest principles of good nutrition are the two major factors that contribute to malnutrition. Malnutrition, caused by ignorance or neglect is more widespread than previously realized.

The heart of the problem in this study hinges on a lack of adequate information about nutrition knowledge and practices among low income homemakers in Louisiana. There is a lack of information concerning the behavioral change of homemakers enrolled in the Expanded Nutrition Program. More information is needed on the enrollees' level of knowledge on nutrition as a result of the education program, also, how well the knowledge gained at the end of the eight weeks is being retained after a reasonable period of time. Additional information is needed on how and what to communicate about nutrition and what specific factors are conducive to building desirable food habits and to modifying poor ones.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to more clearly determine the value of the special nutrition program in three Northeast Louisiana parishes as to the effectiveness of the structured organizational approach, the teaching methods and techniques used and use of sub-professional workers from their respective community. The homemakers knowledge of nutrition was determined at three different periods - "before" any training in nutrition, "immediately after" the eight weeks of training and "four months later". It was believed

that the result of this study would prove valuable in planning such educational programs for low income families in the future.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study were sixfold:

1. To determine the kinds of foods eaten by homemakers in the Expanded Nutrition Program prior to enrollment in the eight week program, immediately after completion, and four months after completion of the eight week program.
2. To determine the level of knowledge of good nutrition as perceived by homemakers prior to enrollment in Expanded Nutrition Program, immediately after completion, and four months after completion of the eight week program.
3. To determine the extent of change in eating habits and knowledge of nutrition immediately after completion and four months after completion of the eight week program.
4. To determine specific changes homemakers feel they made in the way they feed their families as a result of the nutrition program.
5. To determine the willingness of the homemakers involved in the nutrition program to meet with neighbors and extend the effectiveness of the educational program.
6. To determine the homemaking information desired by families involved other than foods and nutrition.

Methodology

The total population of this study was comprised of all families participating in the Expanded Nutrition Education Program in Franklin, Ouachita, and Richland Parishes. The aides name and a list of the families worked with were secured from the Home Demonstration Agent in each of the three parishes. Each list of names was numbered 1-15 with corresponding numbers

being placed in a box. Three numbers were drawn from each of the twenty lists of families in Ouachita Parish for a total of sixty homemakers. Three numbers were drawn from each of eight lists in Franklin and Richland Parishes, respectively. This produced a total of 24 homemakers in each rural parish. Six additional homemakers were selected in Richland and Franklin Parishes by drawing an additional name from six of the eight lists of homemakers. This produced a total of 30 homemakers from Richland and Franklin; and when combined, the total of the two rural parishes, 60, equaled to the total of the urban homemakers, 60, to be interviewed in Ouachita Parish. A total of 120 respondents were selected from the three parishes.

The personal interview method was used to collect the data. Three criteria were used in studying the effectiveness of the special nutrition education program. To establish a benchmark, the homemaker was interviewed by the Extension Aide concerning knowledge of food eaten and knowledge of proper nutrition before she received any information or training concerning nutrition. Immediately after completion of the nutrition program, the Extension Home Economist interviewed the selected homemakers concerning the same topics as above. The writer collected data four months after completion of the program using the interview schedule as above along with a second portion of the interview schedule. The interview schedule used during the three intervals included the same questions as to the kind of food and drink the homemaker had during the 24 hour period prior to the interview. The second portion used during the third interview was devoted to questions which indicated learning changes in eating habits, and expressed needs for future programs.

Data used in the first series of interviews were collected from March 15 to April 1, the second series from June 7 to 21, and the third series from October 19 to November 12, 1969.

Findings and Conclusions

1. There was a substantial increase in milk consumption as a result of the nutrition program. It was concluded that the increase was due to: repetition of the use of milk throughout the educational program; the use of dry milk in new and different ways; and the availibility of and low cost of dry milk.

2. The consumption of meat and meat substitutes showed a significant increase "immediately after" completion of the program and continued to increase "four months later". Increased consumption of meat substituted contributed to the increase.

3. The number of families getting their daily requirement of fruits and vegetables remained the same as before the program began. There was a significant increase "immediately after" but the homemakers had regressed to the original point "four months later". The availibility of this food appearently influenced its consumption. The consumption increased substantially during peak garden seasons.

4. There was an increase in the consumption of bread and cereals. The increase was probably due to the new ways homemekers learned to prepare them and the availabliity of these foods at low cost.

5. The increase in the number of homemakers who had at least one food from each of the Four Major Food Groups "immediately after" completion of the nutrition program indicated the homemakers had more knowledge about the importance of a balanced diet and made changes. The increase "four months later" indicated that the homemakers could possibly have been reading information about nutrition presented through mass media.

6. The percentage of homemakers having an adequate diet did increase "immediately after" the nutrition program, but this per cent was still very low (12 per cent). The regression in the percentage of families having

adequate servings of fruits and vegetables was the cause of many families not having a completely adequate diet.

7. The homemakers knew the foods necessary for good health before the program began, but learned during the program that daily inclusion of foods from each food group was also necessary for good health.

8. Participation in the Expanded Nutrition Education Program brought about changes in food habits and knowledge of homemakers, but the observation "four months later" indicated regression in most cases.

9. The structured organizational approach used by Extension in conducting the program proved to be a profitable experience for the Extension Aide. Aides working directly with the homemakers bridged a cultural gap between the professional Extension worker and the homemaker.

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